

“THE GROUCH”

(aka Dyskolos, Δύσκολος, The Difficult Man)

First performed at Lenaia circa 317BCE

Translated by
George Theodoridis
© 2013

This work may be freely reproduced, stored and transmitted, electronically or otherwise, for any NON-COMMERCIAL purpose. For any theatrical or cinematic use, however, including a non-commercial one, permission must be sought. Under no circumstances should any of this work be used as part of a collage, which includes the work of other writers or translators.

Dramatis Personae

PAN
(*A god*)

SOSTRATOS
(The suitor. A wealthy, young man)

KALLIPPIDES
(*Sostratos' father*)

GETAS
(*Kallippides' slave*)

CHAEREAS
(*Sostratos' friend*)

PYRRHIAS
(*Sostratos' slave*)

KNEMON

(A grouchy old farmer)

MYRRHINE

(Knemon's daughter)

GORGIAS

(Myrrhine's half-brother, Knemon's son by another marriage)

DAOS

(Gorgias' old slave)

SICON

(a cook)

SIMIKE

(Myrrhine's Old Nurse)

SILENT CHARACTERS

SOSTRATOS' MOTHER

SOSTRATOS' SISTER *(Plangon)*

GORGIAS' MOTHER *(unnamed)*

DONAX

VARIOUS GUESTS

THE SCENE

Day.

Phyle, a town in the deme of Attica, the capital of which is Athens.

In the background, the Cave of the Nymphs, a shrine.

Centre Stage, in front of the cave: A statue of Pan

Stage Left: Knemon's house

Stage Right: Gorgias' house

A road that leads to the farms, on one end and to the city on the other, separates the stage and the two houses.

ACT ONE

Enter Pan from the cave and addresses the audience

Pan: *Waves his hand over the set.*

Well then, let me ask you to imagine, please, that we are in Attica. A town called Phyle, in fact.

And that this cave behind me, the cave from which I had just come out, is a shrine and it's one which belongs to all the people of Phyle. Farmers who toil hard all over these rocky grounds and that this place here, right here, is a well known, a very famous, sacred place.

Now, this farm here, on my right, is Knemon's farm. He lives here.

Old man Knemon hates everyone!

A grouch to one and all! Grumpy all day long!

Detests every single mortal, both, individually as well in a crowd.

Crowd? Did I say crowd? Ha! Our Knemon has never, ever opened his mouth to utter a word to anyone! Not a single pleasant word to anyone! Never the first to say "g'day, mate, how you goin'?"

No idle chit chat for our Knemon!

10

Well, except to me, of course. He'll say g'day to me, being his neighbour and all. He speaks to me, as he goes by – in passing. Well, he can't very well avoid me, can he?

Pleasantries by obligation.

Pleasantries in passing.

Pleasantries in passing by neighbours like me, Pan, a god!

Still, such pleasantries turn into regrets the moment immediately after they've... passed by, with our Knemon!

Still, again, with all his misanthropy, our Knemon, went and married a freshly made widow with a son. And immediately, from that wedding day onwards, our Knemon's mouth opened and like a pent up tempest, began the loud arguments. Day and night, night and day! A daughter was born from that unholy union and from then on things worsened even more.

Their life had sunk into the blackest pits of misery! A misery that the poor woman found utterly unbearable, so much so that, one day she packed up her stuff and went off to live with her son, Gorgias. That's the son she had with her previous husband.

Indicating the house on his left

Gorgias has a small farm, this one here, in fact, and this fine, mature young man now looks after his frail old mother with the help of a slave who his father left him as part of his inheritance.

A sensible young man, more sensible than young men of the same age.

Life's troubles bring quick maturity to men.

So, now, old man Knemon lives a lonely life here, Indicating Knemon's house with his daughter, Myrrhini and with an old woman slave, Simike, who does all the household chores.

30

All day long Knemon toils with tilling the soil and with chopping up the fire wood and all day long he fights with everyone, beginning with his slave and with all his neighbours around here and including everyone else, going all the way down to the village of Cholargos!

His daughter, on the other hand is a most honest and most virtuous young girl, who knows no meanness whatsoever and who serves my companions, the Nymphs of this shrine, with utmost reverence and devotion. Her behaviour has touched our hearts and so we, that is I, the god and my attendant nymphs, wish very much to help her.

40

Now, there is also a young man in this story!

A young man whose wealthy father owns a farm worth a lot of money, not very far from here, in fact. But this young man is a bit of a city sleaker. Spends almost all of his time there, in the big city. One day, however, he came past here with a friend of his on their way to do some hunting and that is when I found the opportunity to get him to meet this girl and to fall in love with her.

This, generally speaking, is the plot of this tale and, if you wish to see the details –and I do hope that you do– you'll be able to see them as they emerge in its telling.

Ah! I think I can see our young lover and his friend heading our way, deep in conversation about this very thing, in fact!

I better leave them to it.

Exit Pan into the shrine
Enter Sostratos and Chaereas

50

Chaereas:

So, let me get this right, Sostratos. You're trying to tell me Sostratos, that you saw some free born girl around here, crowning the nymphs with garlands and, bang, crash and without further ado, you immediately fell in love with her, is that right?

Sostratos:

Bang, crash and immediately!

Chaereas:

That's truly very fast, mate! Very fast, indeed! My feeling is though that you've walked out of your house that morning, determined to find someone to fall in love with and so...

Sostratos: *Interrupting*

Chaereas, you're making fun of me! I'm telling you, mate, I am suffering! I am truly suffering! I am in love! Swooning In love! Don't you understand? In love!

Chaereas:

Hmmm, yes I can see that! You're in love! You are suffering!

Sostratos:

This why I've come to you. I've brought you here, not only as a friend but as someone experienced in such matters.

Chaereas:

In such matters, my friend, this is what I usually do:

Let's say some friend of mine takes me along to some whore he fell in love with and he wants me to help him with her, right?

Well, I simply grab her! Grab her straight away, quick smart, and take her over to him. If I need to, I'll get drunk first, burn down the door, even, if I must but I won't be engaging in any little chit chat **with** her about it.

60

No need to ask her any personal details in that case. Just drag her off to him.

Slow work, you see, arouses the desire but fast work brings a fast end to it, so you must give him a bit of each.

I act quite differently however, if that mate of mine is talking to me, as you are doing now, about marriage and about free born girls! That's an altogether different type of case that one and in that case, I act totally differently. In that case, I go slowly about the whole thing: I ask the young lady about her family, about her life, what money she's got to live on for the rest of her life, everything! I do all this because what I want to leave my mate with after it's all over, is a memento of a deed well done!

Sostratos:

Good thinking, Chaereas... but I'm not so sure I like how things have gone for me so far!

Chaereas:

Well then, Sostratos, tell me the whole story from the beginning so that I'll know which way to go about things.

70

Sostratos:

Well, first thing this morning I've sent Pyrrhias, my hunting partner off to... hesitates

Chaereas:

Yes? Off to? Where off to?

Sostratos: *Indicating Knemon's house*

To the girl's father. In there. To arrange a meeting with him. The father or the head of the household, or whatever he is.

Chaereas:

By Herakles, Sostratos! What are you saying, mate?

Sostratos:

I think it was a mistake, Chaereas. Perhaps sending a slave to such errands was the wrong thing to do. But I'm in love, Chaereas and people in love make mistakes. It's not easy to

know what to do when you're in love! You can't see right from wrong when you're in that state! It's a chaotic state to be in!
And now I'm worried!

He's taking so long in there! I told the man. "Go in, find out what's what and then come straight back home!"

Pause as they wait.

Suddenly the door of Knemon's house opens and Pyrrhias rushes out frightened and breathless. His face is bruised and muddy.

80

Pyrrhias:

Make way, make way, everyone! Let me through! Make way!

To Sostratos Run, mate, run! Everyone run away!

There's a wild madman man chasing me! He's crazy! Run!

Sostratos:

Pyrrhias, what's wrong, boy?

Pyrrhias:

Run, I tell you Sostratos! Run away!

Sostratos:

But why, what's up?

Pyrrhias:

He's throwing rocks at me, Sostratos! Great big clods of dirt and great big dirty stones! Run, I tell you, run! He wants to kill me!

Sostratos: *He looks around and sees no one*

Stop it boy! What rocks? Where? What are you talking about?

Pyrrhias: *Turns around and looks back into the distance*

Isn't he chasing me any more?

Sostratos:

By Zeus, boy! No, no one is chasing you, boy!

Pyrrhias:

I was certain he was still chasing me!

Sostratos:

What on earth are you talking about, man?

Pyrrhias:

Come, Sostratos, let's get out of here, please! I'm begging you!
Let's go. Quick!

Sostratos:

Get out of where, Pyrrhias?

Pyrrhias: *Indicating Knemon's door*

Out of here, Sostratos. As far away from that door as possible!
He's the very spawn of trouble, that man, Sostratos! I'm telling
you, Sostratos, he's in the grips of evil spirits! That man in there,
Sostratos, the one you've sent me to see, is totally insane!

Jumps up and down and rubs his hurting toes

Damn! Ouch, ouch, ouch! I must have banged my toes on every
stone along the way! Damn it, I must have broken every one of
them!

92

Sostratos:

Certainly looks like it!

Pyrrhias:

Come, Sostratos, let's go! Let's go because we're going to be
dead if we don't!

We have to watch out! Save ourselves!

By Zeus! I can't talk any more. I'm totally out of breath!

Chaereas:

But why, what happened, Pyrrhias?

Pyrrhias: *Frustrated at his friend's obstinacy.*

I knocked on that door there and asked to see the master of the
house. Some old hag came out, all the way out here where we're
standing now and she pointed him out, out there Indicating with
his hand into the distance within up on that hill there. And there
he was, walking around his damned pear trees, madly collecting
fire wood for himself.

102

Chaereas: *Sarcastically*

What a frightening sight that must have been for you, Pyrrhias!

A man collecting fire wood.

What then, you poor man?

Pyrrhias:

So, I walked over to his paddock and wandered towards him and, wanting to be polite and friendly and tactful, I greeted him from a distance. I said to him, “hello, father! I’ve come to see you about some bit of urgent business I would like to discuss with you.”

That’s what I said to him, in a friendly, polite and tactful manner but he, straight away got furiously angry at me and started shouting at me! “What are you doing walking onto my land, you god-cursed man?” he asks and the very next moment, he bends down, picks up a dirty big, huge sod and throws it at me! Right at my face!

111

Chaereas:

May Hades take the bastard!

Pyrrhias:

I shut my eyes to protect them from the dirt and cursed him. Cursed that stupid bastard! I said to him “Poseidon shit on you” but just then he grabs some stick or other and starts bringing it down over my head, all the while screeching at me at the top of his voice, “What sort of business would you and I could possibly have to discuss, ey? Didn’t you see the public road back there? Why are you here, on my land?”

Chaereas:

From the way you describe him, Pyrrhias I’d say, that’s one madly insane farmer, that one!

Pyrrhias:

In the end I had to try and run away but that madman ran right after me. Chased me for, oh, a good couple of miles, he did! First he chased me all around the hill and then through the woods all the while throwing big lumps of dirt and stones at me

and when he ran out of those stones he started on his pears! He started throwing his pears at me!

Sostratos:

He must be a real wild nutter-man, that old man, ey Pyrrhias?

Pyrrhias:

He certainly is, so please, come on, let's get out of here!

122

Sostratos:

But that would be a cowardly act, Pyrrhias, wouldn't it? And we, my good friend, we are not cowards, are we?

Pyrrhias:

Mates, you two just don't understand! You don't know what you're in for, hanging around here. I'm telling you, this madman will tear us to shreds if he catches us!

Chaereas:

Sostratos, perhaps this madman is a bit too angry today for us to go on with the meeting. Maybe we should just put the meeting off for now. Wait till he's calmed down a bit. That'd be the best time, I think. And remember, Sostratos, the best outcome of any business comes about when it's done at the right time. Timing, Sostratos, timing is everything, every time!

Pyrrhias:

Yes, Sostratos, that's a very sensible approach! Listen to him! Always approach things at the right time! Now let's go home!

Chaereas:

Farmers! They're almost all alike. They are poor and they are bitter and they can be downright nasty! But now that I know the house, I'll come and see him alone, first thing tomorrow. You go home for now Pyrrhias. This will all turn out fine, believe me!

Pyrrhias:

Ah, logic, at long last!

Exit Pyrrhias

Sostratos:

Ha! I knew it! Full of excuses that man! I knew straight away that he really didn't want to come here and do this for me. I knew that he wasn't too keen on this marriage going ahead! And you, Chaereas! You're useless as a friend! May all the gods curse you a million curses!

140

Chaereas:

Me? By Herakles, Sostratos, what on earth have I done?

Sostratos:

And what wrong have I done by coming to this man's farm?

Chaereas:

Did anyone beat you up for doing so?

Sostratos: *Indicating into the distance*

Ah, here comes the man himself!

Chaereas:

Mate, quick, let's get out of here!

Sostratos:

No, we're not going anywhere and you are going to do the talking.

Chaereas:

No way, Sostratos! No way, by Zeus!

Nobody ever listens to me or believes me when I speak; and to speak to this man – are you kidding? No way man, forget it! I'm off!

Exit Chaereas

Sostratos:

Damn, I don't like this at all! Perhaps I was a bit hasty with this meeting... I think I better move away from his door. He looks

like he's truly off his head. Walking and talking to himself like that! He's right off his mad skull!

By all the gods and by Apollo himself, if I were to make a confession, I'd be confessing that I'm scared to death!

Enter Knemon mumbling loudly to himself

154

Knemon:

Well, don't they say that Perseus was twice blessed? Blessed once because he was able to fly like a bird and not having to meet any of these people who walk around on earth and blessed a second time because he was able to turn to stone those who pestered him!

Now, if I had powers like that, I'd fill the place up with statues! Statues made of stone!

But, by Asclepios, without these gifts, this life is no life at all!

160

They come right up onto my fields these days! Right up onto my land to talk to me making me waste the whole day up there, every day, up there, next to the main road. Chit chat, chit chat, yakity yak! By Zeus! They make me waste the whole day, by Zeus!

Damn them all, I hardly ever get any work done on that part of the farm these days! I don't even bother to go down there any more.

Moved all the way up the hill, trying to escape those annoying wanderers but now they've started to hunt me down! They come all the way up the hill these days!

Curse this overpopulation!

Suddenly notices Sostratos

By the Lord of the underworld, Hades himself!

Who on earth is that standing by my door now? Where did he sprout from?

Sostratos:

Oh, gods, is he going to hit me now?

Knemon:

Bah! There's no place on earth where one can find some peace and quiet nowadays! Not even a place to hang yourself!

170

Sostratos:

Oh, no! He's angry at me!

To Knemon

Father no! I... I've got an appointment with someone, father.
I'm supposed to be meeting him here.

Knemon:

To the audience

See what I mean?

Back to Sostratos

Here? Why, here? Have you decided that this is a meeting place of some sort have you? Have you decided that this is the shrine of Leos? Do you always conduct your meetings here, in front of my door?

Sostratos nods and then corrects himself. He moves back in fear.

Well then, why don't you also build a seat or two around here? Make it cosier, easier on your bums! Build a whole board room here, if you like!

The nerve of these people!

Knemon exits into his house

Pyrrhias creeps timidly back

Sostratos:

Damn! What a grouch! I think I've bitten more than I can chew here!

179

Pyrrhias:

Yes, I've got a hunch that there's more to this story than meets the eye, Sostratos. Worse things are about to hit us, I think!

Sostratos:

Yes, by all the gods, I think you're right, Pyrrhias! I think I better go and get my father's slave, Getas. He's got a real brain on him that man and he's into a million things. I think he's the only one able to soften this madman's rage.

I hate leaving things unfinished for too long. Lots can happen in a single day.

Hang on, Pyrrhias. Stand back. I think I can hear someone coming to the door.

They move back and hide behind the statue of Pan
Enter Myrrhini from the house, carrying an urn

189

Myrrhini: *To the audience*

Ah, poor, poor, me! Problems upon problems! They never ever end!

What am I to do now?

My Nurse has dropped the bucket in the well!

Sostratos: *dazzled by her beauty*

Oh, Zeus! Oh, Zeusy Zeus! Oh Phoebus Apollo with your sweet, sweet lyre! Oh darling sons of Leto in the sky, dear, dear Dioskouri!

What unchallengeable gorgeousness!

Myrrhini:

“Get some water for me,” daddy told us just before he went out.

“Get some water and get it hot and ready for my bath” he told us.

Sostratos:

Oh, what unequalled gorgeousness – unchallengeable beauty!

Myrrhini:

If he finds out what happened he’ll beat the old woman to death!

But there’s no time to waste on talking about it now!

Turns to the statue and talks to *it*.

Dear, dear Pan and you Nymphs, can I take some water from your stream in there?

Suddenly she sees the two men

Oh, I do hope I’m not disturbing people in their prayer!

Sostratos reveals himself

Sostratos:

Let me do this for you, dear girl.

Let me have your urn and I'll go inside, fill it up for you and come right back out again!

200

Myrrhini:

Ah, thank you. Yes, take it and please hurry back.

Sostratos takes the urn from her hand

Sostratos:

Ah, what a gentle creature! What a polite girl! And what an uncouth peasant that grouch inside is!

Exit Sostratos into the cave

Myrrhini:

Oh, my blessed gods of Olympos, who will save me from all my misery?

Suddenly a sound emanates from Gorgias' house, across the road from Knemon's

Ah! What was that noise? Gods, I hope it's not daddy. He'll kill me if he sees me outside the house!

Enter Daos from Gorgias' house

Daos:

I've been waiting and watching you from inside for a while now. I wanted to come out and help you, Myrrhini. Your poor father must be working all by himself on his farm now. I think I better go look for him and help him for a bit.

Raising his hands up in prayer

Ah, wretched goddess, Poverty! What have we done to deserve your constant attendance? Why live with us, in our house, so permanently, so contentedly?

Enter Sostratos with the urn which he hands to Myrrhini.

211

Sostratos:

Here you are, young lady!

Daos: *Takes the urn from Sostratos' hand*

Here, give this to me!

To Myrrhini

What on earth does this fool want?

Hands the urn to Myrrhini

Here, take this and go and take care your father, Myrrhini!

Myrrhini takes the urn and rushes back into her house.

Sostratos:

Curse me and my luck!

Pyrrhias:

Stop worrying, Sostratos! That which needs to be done shall still be done!

Sostratos:

How will it be done?

Pyrrhias:

I said, don't worry! Now, you wanted to go find Getas, right?

So, go and find Getas! Explain to him what's going on and then come back here.

Exit Pyrrhias and Sostratos

Daos: To the audience

Now what sort of peculiar business was this? I don't like this little game at all!

Who is this young man who's cruising around Myrrhini? It all looks a bit too sneaky to me.

Damn you Knemon!

220

May the gods destroy you totally for leaving a young, innocent girl, like Myrrhini alone and unprotected in the world like this, as if her house is empty and deserted!

Obviously our little friend here sniffed this out and has come to try out his luck with her. I must talk to her bother about all this and try and protect her as best we can.

Yes, I think I better go and see him straight away.

He hears noises of revelers within from people approaching

230

Ah, I see some worshipers of Pan coming this way. A bit drunk by the looks of them. Better not stand in their way.

Exit Daos into Gorgias' house

Pause

ACT TWO

(or a choral interlude)

Enter Gorgias and Daos from Gorgias' house. Gorgias is carrying a spade and Daos a pick.

Gorgias:

Now tell me once more, Daos. How is it you treated such a serious matter so casually!

Daos:

How else could I have treated it, Gorgias?

Gorgias:

How? Daos, you should have approached this rascal the moment he approached Myrrhini and warned him there and then:

“Approach this girl once more and you will approach great suffering!” You should have told him that! You should have said that to him. Instead, you just stood right back and let him get on with it, as if you didn’t care about our Myrrhini at all!

You are our slave, Daos! Our slave and you have duties to our family! Very serious duties, Daos!

240

Myrrhini is my sister, Daos and I care very much for her welfare, so you must look after her. And just because our father wants to behave like a stranger to us and just because he is such a grouch, that doesn’t mean that we should behave in the same manner and ignore the poor girl! Because, if that poor girl falls into something... you know, something shameful, the disgrace will be mine. Neighbours won’t know what had actually happened, they’ll just know that something did and that it would be my fault for not protecting her from it.

They walk to Knemon's house, Daos reluctantly so.

Now let's knock on their door.

Gorgias knocks on the door

Daos:

Gorgias, I... I am afraid of the old grouch. I'm afraid the moment he sees me near his door he'll start a war!

Gorgias:

Yes, he is a bit difficult that man, always starting a fight, even when he doesn't need to.

250

I've no idea how anyone could change him, though. I don't know what advice one could possibly give the old grump to make him change his ways. No good trying to force him into being good humoured, the law is on his side about that and nor is it any good trying to advise him, he's far too well grown into the bad tempered man that he is! It's who he is: A very difficult man! A very grouchy grouch! A very grumpy grump!

Daos: *He sees Sostratos in the distance*

Ah, look! We haven't wasted our time coming here after all!

Indicating Sostratos

Didn't I tell you? Our man might have gone away but he has returned!

Gorgias:

That man over there, you mean? The one with the classy *cloak*?

Daos:

The very same!

Gorgias:

Classy cloak and classy expression add up to no good, to my way of thinking!

They hide behind the statue of Pan

Enter Sostratos. He turns and speaks to the audience

258

Sostratos:

Damn it, I couldn't get a hold of Getas. Mother's to blame for that. She's off on her daily routine of sacrificing! every day a sacrifice of some sort for her! This god one day, that god the next, god only knows to what god she's sacrificing today. The whole district has been blessed with her sacrifices and the whole district usually turns up for a feed at our place. Poor Getas was sent off to fetch a cook to cook for the feast, so, no Getas to be had by me!

And, anyhow, I said to myself, enough of this messing about! I'm going to deal with this matter directly and by myself! So, I skipped the sacrifices and came back here to continue from where I had left off.

Now, let's see. I'll begin again by knocking on the door. This will stop me weighing the matter over and over in my head for too long!

Gorgias and Daos emerge from behind the statue.

Gorgias:

Young man, may I have a few words with you? They are of quite some import to your good self.

Sostratos:

But of course, go ahead!

270

Gorgias:

My view, young man is that there is a limit for all of us, whether we are prosperous or in difficult financial circumstances. And when that limit is reached, a change begins to take place. Now, the prosperous man, will continue to be prosperous, so long as his prosperity does not come about from injuring others. If, however, this prosperity of his leads him to cause injury to others, then, you can be sure, young man, that a change will come about; a change for the worse!

280

The same of course will happen for those who lead a life under financial difficulties. If these financial difficulties don't lead them to cause injury to others but they carry their difficulties bravely and virtuously, there may well come a time when their

difficulties end and the change comes, a change which will bring happy times.

See? Change! Get my meaning, young man?

Sostratos nods but then corrects himself.

Gorgias tugs at Sostratos' cape menacingly

My meaning is this – young man!

Don't rely too much on your prosperity *continuing for ever*.

Don't look down on us folk because we are in difficult financial circumstances. Do you get my meaning now?

Sostratos nods

People should judge you by your actions. They should be able to tell by those actions if you are worthy of your good or bad fortune.

Sostratos:

So... I am causing some injury to others?

Gorgias:

Well, yes. It looks to me like you've set your mind upon doing just that. To cause some injury to others. It seems to me that you are trying to trick a virtuous girl into committing an un-virtuous, wicked and shameful act! A free-born girl, mind! You are lurking about, waiting for the right moment to lurch in and do something which would bring about... which would bring about your death – many times over! Get my meaning now?

292

Sostratos:

Dearest Apollo!

Gorgias:

It's not the correct behaviour now, is it, that you, the lazy, the idle one, to come here, causing us, the hard working folk, a whole lot of mess and trouble, is it? No, it isn't!

And there is also one other thing you must be made fully aware of and it is this: There's nothing worse than for the poor to suffer the sufferings of injustice. First, because it is a very sad thing and second because they will regard this suffering of theirs not as a simple injustice but as a gross arrogance of the grossest type by those who have caused them to suffer that gross injustice! Get my meaning now?

Sostratos:

Well now, hang on a bit my friend! First let me wish for you that Fortune send you her blessings in abundance; but now just listen to me for a bit as well, ey? Just listen for a bit. See if you can get my meaning, just as I got yours.

Daos: *To Gorgias*

Bravo, master! Bravo! Well deserved blessings to you, master!
Bravo!

301

Sostratos: *To Daos*

And you, big mouth, pay attention!

To both

I merely saw a beautiful young girl and fell in love with her, that's all! Now if this is an unjust thing to do then, perhaps, I have committed an injustice, what else can one say about such a thing? It's love! I ask you, is love an injustice?

And no, I'm not hanging around here so as to trick her into committing something un-virtuous but because I want to speak to her father. I am, Sostratos, a wealthy man and a free born man and I am very willing to marry her even if she has no dowry and I am willing, too, to swear to her that I shall be with her and that I will love her always and for ever!

310

Now, if I had come here with nasty schemes in my head against you, my friends, well, let this god, here, Pan and all the Nymphs attending him, strike me dead this very moment, on this very spot, right here, right now and in front of your very own door! If this is the sort of impression I give you about me, the impression that I'm a nasty schemer, then this would bother me a great deal! Get my meaning?

Gorgias:

Oh, now... hold on! Perhaps I have said a few words more than I should have, young man. Don't you worry about it! You have totally changed my mind and you have totally made a new friend! And, friend, accept this friendship, not from a stranger but from a brother. The girl's half brother. I am Gorgias and Myrrhini is my half-sister!

Sostratos:

Ah, but in that case, you'll be able to help me, by Zeus! Help me on all sorts of other things as well!

320

Gorgias:

Help you? How?

Sostratos:

Well, Gorgias, I take you for a wise man. I believe you know what sort of help I would need, no?

Gorgias:

Ah! I get your meaning. Now, look, Sostratos! It would be very easy for me to just find some excuse and send you away but I must try and make everything clear to you. You see, Myrrhini has such a father –such a father, that, well you just won't find his like anywhere on earth! Not now, not in the past and not in the future!

Sostratos:

You mean he's a real grump, right? I think I've gathered that already.

Gorgias:

A grump and a grouch! A grouch and a miser! A miser and misanthrope!

He owns this farm here, which is worth quite a bit really. One, two talents, who knows, but a lot. Anyhow, he works it all by himself. Ploughs **the** whole paddock with his bare hands. He has no servants, lives with no man and hires no one to help him with it. He does it all himself.

330

He loves nothing more than to avoid seeing anyone and everyone! The only one he lets go near him when he's working is his daughter. He'll talk with her and with no one else. Only her, and he says that this daughter of his, Myrrhini, will marry only when he, personally, when he, himself personally, finds for her a husband and that husband will have to be just like him in every way! Just like him! Imagine! Just like old Knemon!

Sostratos:

Ha! Which means never, right?

Gorgias:

Which means never, yes. And that's why, my dear friend I think you should simply not bother yourself with this enterprise. You'll be wasting your time. Fate has dished these problems out to us, his own children, so leave them for us to deal with.

340

Sostratos:

But by the gods, Gorgias, have you never fallen in love?

Gorgias:

Who me? No, not possible!

Sostratos:

Not possible? Why is that? What on earth is stopping you?

Gorgias:

Troubles, concerns, more troubles and more concerns. They come relentlessly and repeatedly. Not a moment's rest from them!

Sostratos:

Hmm, well then, it's obvious young man, that you lack the experience to deal with matters of love and that's why you counsel me to stop wooing Myrrhini. But this is not up to me, you see, Gorgias! Love is always in the hands of the gods!

Gorgias:

Look, Sostratos, your love affair will cause no grief to us but it will cause quite some grief to you. Unnecessary grief at that.

Sostratos:

So, tell me, how can I get that girl?

348

Gorgias:

You can't get that girl!

He sees Sostratos' determination on his face

Ah, well, all right then. You win! We will help you.

Well then, follow me and always stand next to me! We're going up to our farm. His is on the glen next to it.

Sostratos:

And then what?

Gorgias:

And then I'll start a conversation with him about his daughter's marriage, pretend it just came up quite casually. Now that's a marriage that I, personally would very much like to see!

No one else dares talk to him about that. The moment they utter the first word about it, he jumps up and flies off the handle and then starts chucking insults left, right and centre! Whoever mentions marriage to his daughter gets insulted for being a lazy, good for nothing, hopeless, useless... and so, if he ever sees you looking idle and looking like some pampered rich boy, he won't even want to look at you, let alone talk to you!

Sostratos:

Is he there right now?

Gorgias:

Not quite yet but he's been waiting for me for quite a while so he'll be out very soon. He'll be heading to the fields by his usual path.

Sostratos:

And the girl? Will he be taking Myrrhini along?

360

Gorgias:

I'm not sure.

Sostratos:

Oh, how happy that would make me!

Lead on, my good man. Lead on wherever you wish to lead on to and... and you will support me in my efforts, now won't you?

Gorgias:

Support you? How exactly will I support you?

Sostratos:

Any way you can but... let's just first go to wherever you say he is.

Gorgias:

Alright but what about you?

Sostratos:

Me? What about me?

Gorgias:

What will you be doing while we're working, just standing around in your pretty cape?

Sostratos:

What? Why not?

Gorgias:

Because Knemon will be chucking dirt balls at you and then he'll start screeching at you and calling you all sorts of names, including useless bum! No, mate. You'll need to be doing some hard work, some digging, like us. Then he might see you working and take you for a poor man working hard for **his** crust and allow himself to listen to a word or two from you. Otherwise...

Sostratos:

I am ready and willing to obey your every command Gorgias. Let us proceed!

370

Gorgias:

Why on earth are you in such a hurry to torture yourself, anyhow, mate?

Daos pulls Gorgias to one side and whispers to him

Daos:

Listen, boss, I think that we should work so hard that we get this guy to collapse from exhaustion. That will stop him from coming around here again, making trouble for everyone!

Sostratos:

Right! Hand me a pick, someone!

Daos:

Here, take mine and, you two go ahead. I'll get back to building the stone fence at the other end of the field. It's another job that needs doing.

Sostratos:

Fine! Give it here!

Daos:

Thanks man, you've saved my life!

To Gorgias:

Right, I'm off to the wall, boss. You'll find me working there.

Exit Daos

Sostratos:

Here's what I'm thinking, Gorgias. It's an either or for me: either death or that sweet Myrrhini for me!

380

Gorgias:

If what you're saying is what you're thinking, then god's blessings to you, Sostratos!

Exit Gorgias

Sostratos: *Raising his hands to the sky in prayer*

Oh, gods! Most blessed gods!

All these hurdles you've put in front of me on this enterprise of mine, most blessed gods, have made me redouble my efforts, redouble my desires, redouble my determination!

If, as they say, my Myrrhini is a girl who's innocent of the crowding gatherings of women, innocent of the cunning and the sly ways of this life; if she hasn't been frightened by some aunt or

nurse, if she has lived all her life with that rough old grouchy father of hers who gives her a free-born's home and who keeps her away from dishonourable men, then would not my marrying her be a true blessing?

Groans as he lifts up the pick

Argh! This pick weighs a ton and a half! Ouch! It's killing me! Ah, well, no good whingeing now, now that I've got things on the right path!

Exit Sostratos in the same direction as Gorgias.

Pause

Enter Sicon the cook, carrying a sheep on his shoulders and Getas loaded with a huge bundle of cushions and rugs

Sicon:

This is a very odd sheep this one, Getas. A weird sort of sheep. Contrarian. Stubborn. Highly undisciplined!

Damn you sheep!

When I carry it on my shoulders like this, the stupid animal opens its huge jaws wide and grabs branches hanging from olive trees and fig trees and then twists itself all around until it manages to get away from me. On the other hand, if I put it down on the ground, the damned thing won't move! Not forward, not backward, not sideways, not East and not West!

It's a very bad mannered sheep, this one! Ill bred, I'd say!

Here I am, a cook being turned into a roast by the very sheep I want to roast!

Ah, thank goodness, we have arrived!

Turns and sees Getas well behind him

Come on, slow goat!

We're here, Getas! The Cave of the Nymphs! End of our woes and tribulations and the beginning of the woes and tribulations of this beast! Let's get on with the sacrifice!

Hello Pan! How you doing?

402

Getas: *In agony under the heavy load he's carrying*

Gods help me!

Why on earth have these damned women loaded me up with a load fit to break the backs of four donkeys?

Sicon:

They must be expecting hundreds of people, Getas. Look at all those rugs and cushions you're carrying!

Getas:

What do I do now?

Sicon:

Just drop them down here!

Getas: *Does so*

Agh, that's better!

What if she sees another dream, one about the other Pan, the one they have in Paiania? I bet she'll have us get up immediately and start walking all the way there to do more sacrifices!

Sicon:

What? Who dreamed what?

Getas:

Oh, man! Leave me alone, man!

Sicon:

Yes, but who are you talking about? Who dreamed what?

410

Getas:

The woman who owns me, man, who do you think?

Sicon:

Yes? And what dream did she dream?

Getas: *Confidingly*

Oh, alright then but you won't do me in, will you?

Sicon:

No, tell me!

Getas:

In her dream she dreamed that Pan –

Sicon:
Which Pan, this one?

Getas:
Yes, this one.

Sicon:
So, yes, what did this Pan do in her dream?

Getas:
Sostratos... (*hesitating*)

Sicon:
Which Sostratos, your master, Sostratos?

Getas:
Yes, my master, Sostratos. By Zeus, Sicon, who else do you think I mean?

Sicon:
What a lovely man that one, ey? Well, go on!

Getas:
Well, she dreamed that Pan tied my master up in chains...

Sicon:
Oh! Lord, Apollo!

Getas:
Then the god gave Sostratos a pick and a spade and sent him off to a farm nearby and ordered him to dig it all up!

Sicon:
I've never heard of such a dream before!

Getas:
That's why we're doing the sacrifice. To turn evil into good!

418

Sicon:
I see. Alright then, grab the stuff and bring them into the cave.

We'll make it all very comfortable in there and get everything ready for them.
And then get ourselves all prepared for when they arrive so we can give them a perfect sacrifice.
Ah, good luck to them! Good luck to them all!
Relax, man! Stop frowning like that, you bag of misery guts!
Today I'll feed you like you've never been fed before!

Getas: *flatteringly*

I have always said you're the best cook around, Sicon!
The best... that is if only I could believe you when you say you'll feed me!

Both exit into the cave

ACT THREE *(or a choral interlude)*

Knemon opens his door and from the threshold he turns his head and shouts inside

Knemon:

Now, Simike, shut the door after me and don't open it for anyone but me! I won't be returning until it's well and truly dark! You hear me?

*Noises from the revelers within just as Knemon shuts the door behind him and is about to move away from his house.
He sees the crowd of guests approaching and stops in anger
Enter the guests for the sacrifice, headed by Sostratos' mother.*

A young woman has a flute, two others are carrying baskets (with offerings for the sacrifice). Others are carrying wine flasks

Sostratos' Mother:

Come on, Phlangon, come on girl! Move your feet. We should have had the sacrifice done by now!

433

Knemon: *Aghast at the sight of the crowd arriving*

By Zeus! What is this cursed crowd suddenly swarming in?

Curse them! People! Bah!

Sostratos' Mother:

And you, young lady, lift up your flute and play for our lord god

Pan!

Pan, they say, does not like people approaching him in silence.

Enter Getas from the cave

Getas:

Thank Zeus, you all got here alright!

Knemon:

Mighty Herakles, what a shocking disgrace!

Getas: *To Sostratos' mother*

We've been sitting here waiting for you for so long!

Sostratos' Mother:

Everything in order, in there?

Getas:

They certainly are, by Zeus... except the sheep couldn't wait for you and died of old age! Hahahaha!

Go! Go inside!

Sostratos' Mother:

Well, come on, folks! Go inside! Hurry. Go and get all the baskets with the offerings ready.

Getas

The cakes, the purifying water, the incense... Have you got everything?

Some women nod

Turns to Knemon

Well, old man? What is it? What's made your jaw drop like that?

442

Knemon:

To the crows with you, you lazy scum! You're turning me, too, into a useless loafer!

Exit Gekas into the cave

How am I supposed to leave my house and go to work with you lot hanging about?

These sacred Nymphs are such pain! What neighbours to have, ey? Bah! I feel like tearing this house down and going off to build another somewhere else, as far away from here as I can!

Indicating the crowd which is still turning up

Look at them all!

In they come with their beds and their flasks of wine... for themselves, of course, not the god!

All it takes is a bit of incense and some flat cake to *toss over a small fire* on the altar, with reverence. That's all the god needs. This bunch of thieves toss the worst part of the meat to the god – the bony bit of the tail– some offal and they chomp down the rest! Some piety!

Bangs onto his door

Hey, Simike, open up, old woman! I'm coming back. I think we should do the indoors work today. I need to keep an eye on the house!

Knemon's door opens, Simike comes out.

I'm coming back. I think we should do the indoors work today. I need to keep an eye on the house!

Both go inside

Pause

Enter Gekas from the cave followed by one of the slave girls

He is angry

455

Getas:

Are you people completely stupid? Or drunk? Or both? Or what? How could you forget the pot, for Zeus' sake? The pot! How are we going to cook the meat now? Are you all nursing a hangover or something?

What on earth am I going to do now, ey? Tell me girl!

The girl shrugs

No, that's right! No idea! Zeus damn you all!

Looks like I'll have to knock on this door here and bother the god's neighbour!

Zeus damn you and curse you all!

He walks over to Knemon's door and knocks and Shouts

Hello? Hey Boy! Hello? Boy open up!

Back to the slave girl

What a spoiled bunch of slave girls you all are these days!

Spoiled and useless! Useless for anything but screwing! Screwing every man and boy around!

Right, girl? Am I not right, girl?

Knocks on the door again, anger rising.

Hey, boy! Open up!

460

The modern slave girls know nothing about anything and can do nothing! Head full of hot air and hot sex!

Back to the slave girl

Isn't that right, girl? Am I not right, girl? I am right, right?

Girl shrugs her shoulders again

Getas knocks again

Come on, boy open up!

Sex and blackmail when they're caught doing it.

Knocks again. He is furious

Hey, boy! Come on, open this door!

The girl, frightened now, turns and runs back into the cave

What on earth is going on here? Where are the slaves of this house?

Loud, ominous footsteps are heard from inside the house

Ah! Finally! I hear someone coming.

Knemon opens the door and steps out. He is furious. Getas steps back in fear

Knemon:

You miserable, miserable, miserable useless wretch!

What are you doing banging at my door? What do you want?

Getas:

Hey, old man! You don't have to bite my head off!

Knemon:

By Zeus! You, you miserable creature, I'll not only bite your head off but I'll eat you alive, if I want to, you useless little no hoper!

Getas: *Playfully*

Oh no, you wouldn't. Not really. Eh, would you?

Knemon:

What business do you and I share, you god-cursed fool?

470

Getas:

None. No business at all. Showing that he's holding no papers in his hands No requests for loan repayments, see? No witnesses, no business at all. I just came to ask you if I could borrow a pot from you. I need a pot to cook the sacrificial meat... for the sacrifice we're having in there.

Knemon:

A pot? A pot? Do you think I'm into pots and pans and sacrifices of bulls and chooks, you idle slug?

Getas:

No, clearly, not even a slug! Right, I'll be off then!

The women told me to come over and knock on your door. See if you've got a pot. That I did. You don't. Now I'm going back to tell them that you are not into pots. Have a nice day!

Walks away but stops in front of the statue

Lord Pan, almighty! What a grey haired snake you've got for a neighbour!

Exit Getas into the cave.

480

Knemon:

Blood sucking animals!

Bang, bang, bang at your door as if you're their long lost friend!

Walks up to the mouth of the cave and shouts

If I catch any of you walking up to my door, I'll make an example of you, such an example that the whole city will learn from it that I'm not like everyone else. I am quite different!

And, by the way, the one you've just sent out here before,
whoever he is, he is damned lucky!

Exit Knemon into his house

Enter Sicon and Getas from the cave

Sicon:

Damn the bastard!

He was having you on, Getas. Took you for a sucker. Perhaps
you spoke to him as if you were some shit stirring nuisance!
Some people, people like you know nothing about the subtle art
of conning people into giving them stuff.

I'm an expert at this. I have conned lots of people in the city.
Thousands and thousands of them, in fact. I know how to trick
them, see?

490

I bug them all the time, over and over again and I get them to
give me lots and lots and lots of all sorts of kitchen utensils.

See, you've got to sweet talk them into stuff like this.

If an old codger answers the door, I address him with a syrupy
"father" or "daddy." If it's an old hag, you say, "dear mother" or
"mummy," if she's older still, you greet her with "priestess" and
if it's the slave boy who answers, you utter the words, "my
dearest young man." Get me?

But you! You, Getas are only good for the noose! You're
ignorant! You can't just knock on people's doors and yell out,
"hey, boy!"

Now watch and learn!

*Goes to Knemon's door and knocks gently then shouts softly,
syrupy.*

Hey, boyyyyy? Come and open the door, *please* young man!

*The ominous steps again before Knemon opens the door, raging
with anger. Sicon steps back petrified for a second but soon
regains his composure.*

Oh, hi father! I was just calling you. Come outside for a minute?

Knemon: *To Getas*

You again!

Getas: *terrified, runs to hide behind Sicon*

Here we go again!

Sicon:

Ah, yes, father. I'm here for that very same thing!

500

Knemon:

You're busting my guts on purpose, now, aren't you? Didn't I tell you not to knock on my door ever again?

Shouts inside

Simike, bring me my whip!

Sicon:

No, no, no! Hang on a minute my good man! Hang on a minute! In the name of Zeus, father, hang on, little daddy!

He moves back a bit, frightened but returns

Knemon:

You're back again to pester me!

Sicon: *about to curse*

May Poseidon...

Knemon:

Are you still here?

Sicon:

I came to ask you for a little cooking vessel!

Knemon:

I have no cooking vessels! I have no cleaver! I have no salt and I have no vinegar!

I have told you never to approach my door again!

Sicon:

Not to me you didn't!

Knemon:

I just did!

508

Sicon:

Many thanks! Very civil of you, daddy.

But, could you perhaps inform me as to the possible whereabouts of one such vessel?

Knemon:

Have I not told you? Are you still blubbering?

Sicon: *moving away*

Have a nice day, daddy!

Knemon:

I have no desire to have a nice day!

Sicon:

As you please, sir. Have a terrible day, if that is your wish.

Knemon:

Argh! Will I never be rid of these pests?

Exit Knemon into his house

Sicon:

Wow! What dexterity! He certainly did me over, the bastard, didn't he? He conned us, Getas! The rotten man, conned us well and truly!

Getas:

He did, yes, he did that. It seems begging takes a lot more dexterity than we've got.

Sicon:

Yes, and things are also different from one door to the next. I don't know if we should knock on another door now though. I mean, if they all use dexterity so dexterously I'm going to find this begging business far too hard, around these parts.

I think I'll better forget about the pot and just roast the meat. I've got a sort of a frying pan, anyhow. Right then, I shall use what I've got and stuff you, people of Phyle! Stuff you all! I don't need you!

Exit Sicon and Getas into the cave.

Pause

Enter Sostratos from the field, limping and covered with dirt. He is tired and in pain

521

Sostratos:

Anyone who's missing out on some troubles, let him come over here! He'll get his fill of them!

Ouch! Ouch! The pain! The pains! My back, my guts, my neck, my whole body is in agonizing torment!

Leans against the statue

The moment I got to the paddock, I **went** straight to work, just like a young man would. I lifted the pick up and dropped it down and dug at the soil with all my might, like a regular farm hand! On and on I dug and dug and dug at that soil, as if I loved all that hard work.

For quite a while, anyhow.

530

And, while I was doing all that hard work, I kept turning and looking all around me, hoping to see the old man with the girl. With Myrrhini. That's when I'd steal a chance to rub my lower back without the two boys noticing but as time dragged on I kept bending my back further and further, until I ended up a hunchback and at that stage it became as hard as a block of wood.

Hours passed and no one appeared. The sun above us was scorching.

Gorgias kept looking over at me as I was bending over and straightening up, bending over and straightening up like the bucket **arm** over a well.

Suddenly he stops and says to me, "mate, it doesn't look as if he's coming today."

So I said to him, to Gorgias, I mean, "well then, what do we do?"

And then he said to me, "we'll have to let it go for today and look out for him again tomorrow."

540

Then Daos came to take over from me.

So, that's how the first turn of the dance ended.

Now, I have no idea why or how I ended up here, in this situation. What's wrong with me? I feel as if this business has dragged me here against my will, as if, somehow, I am someone's puppet.

*Smoke from the sacrifice emanates from the cave.
Sostratos notices with curiosity. He looks into the cave, sees
nothing and withdraws further back to avoid the smoke.*

Pause

*From within the cave we hear Getas, coughing and splattering
and talking to angrily to a slave girl, who ends up crying in
distress.
He is on his way out.*

Getas:

That's the new generation of slaves for you! You are all so
hopeless, soooooo hopeless, I need sixty hands to do the work!
Useless! It is I, woman, I, who pokes at the coals, who kneads
the flour, who chops the meats, who must toss them about and
tease them about. and it looks like it will be I, alone, who'll be
taking care of the whole feast! Damn this smoke! It is blinding
me!

Enter Getas, coughing and splattering and rubbing his eyes.

550

Sostratos:

Getas!

Getas: *still rubbing his eyes*
Who, who's calling my name?

Sostratos:

Getas, it's me!

Getas:

Me? Who's Me?

Sostratos:

Me, I!

Getas:

Me, I, who?

Sostratos:

Can't you see me, Getas? Oh, you poor man!

Getas: *Finally manages to see*

Ah! Yes, I can now see me... I... my master! Hi boss!

Sostratos:

What on earth are you up to in there?

Getas:

What are we up to? Well, we've just done a sacrifice and now we're preparing the feast.

Sostratos:

Is mother in there with you?

Getas:

Been there all along.

Sostratos:

Father, too?

Getas:

No, we're still waiting for your father.

Sostratos: *Whispering conspiratorially*

Getas, come closer!

Getas obeys

Getas, the sacrifice is really quite timely. I'll go right now and invite Gorgias and his slave to the feast. Once they partake of the delicious food, they'll support me even better in my efforts to marry my Myrrhini.

562

Getas:

What? What are you saying, boss? You want to invite even more people to this feast? Oh, that's great! That's just great, boss! Boss no! Sees Sostratos' determination Oh, fine then! Invite every one! Invite three thousand of them! Fine! I should have known that I won't manage to put even a single tiny morsel in my mouth! Go on, then, invite the whole town! Invite them all, the sacrificed sheep is done to perfection, everyone should take a bite out of it!

Ah, but boss, these women in there, boss! They are very funny, master! No, not funny, odd! No, not odd, stingy! Do you think they'll offer anyone even as much as a pinch of salty salt?

By Demetre no! No way!

570

Sostratos:

Getas, no, don't worry, boy! Today is going to be a great day. I am full of good prophesies today suddenly, as if sorry for his hubris, turns remorsefully to Pan. Oh, Pan, my god! I pray to you every time I go past your statue. Truly, I do! It makes me... it makes me... more philanthropic!

Exit Sostratos to go fetch Gorgias and Daos

Enter Simike from Knemon's house. She is clearly distressed

Simike:

Oh, Zeus! Oh, Zeusy Zeus! Oh my dearest Zeus! Dear, dear Zeus! The misery you've burdened me with! Oh, Zeusy, Zeus, dearest!

Getas:

Well, stone my crows! Would you believe it? A woman just came out of that old grump's house!

Simike:

Oh, Zeusy, Zeus! Am I going to cop it now! Am I going to get hurt now! Am I going to get beaten up now! Oh, that damned bucket! That cursed bucket! I've dropped it in the well and I tried to get it out before my master found out about it. I tried!

Getas:

Yes, yes, so, what happened?

Simike:

I tied his hoe to some frayed old piece of rope and... well the rope was rotten and so it broke on me! Splash! Down they both went! Drowned! Hoe and bucket together!

580

Getas:

Haha! Good! Serve you right, old woman! You and him together! Like bucket and hoe! Hahaha!

Simike:

Oh, I'm going to suffer now! And how! I let his hoe fall into the well along with the bucket! Ahhhh! Zeus help me! Zeus save me!

Getas:

Now all that remains to be done is for you to fall in there after them and the job will be completed!

Simike:

And to add to my miserable luck, the master is running around madly looking for his hoe, shouting and screaming for it, banging doors everywhere. He wants to move some dung about the back yard, the poor man! What a time for him to want to do that!

The sound of heavy angry footsteps and grunts from within the house

Oh, no, I can hear him coming! What am I going to do now?

Getas:

Run away, old girl! Run away! He'll kill you if he catches you!

The door opens and Knemon appears

Oops! Too late! Well, try and defend yourself then, old darling!

Simike runs and hides behind Getas

Enter Knemon

Knemon:

Where's that thieving woman?

Simike: *Giving up*

Master, I didn't mean to! Honest, master! It just fell into the well, master. I didn't mean to let it fall into the well master! It just fell by itself, master!

Knemon:

You! Go inside, you!

Simike:

Why, what are you going to do with me?

590

Knemon:

Who me? I'm going to tie you up and lower you down the well.

Simike:

Oh, no, master! No! No you can't do that! It's not proper for a woman to go down into a well!

Knemon:

And I will use the same rope! By the gods, I will! And, with a bit of luck, it will be even more rotten than the last!

Simike: *Shouts towards Gorgias' house*

Help! Help! Daos, neighbour, come help me!

Knemon:

You're calling Daos, are you, you god-cursed old hag?

Simike goes over and knocks on Gorgias' door

Knemon:

Hey! I'm talking to you! Inside! Go on! Inside you!

Simike:

Oh, poor woman! I'll be all alone in there! There's no one here to help **me**! Oh, poor creature!

Exit Simike into Knemon's house

Getas approaches Knemon

Getas:

If you like, I can go down the well. I can go down as well as any man. For the bucket, or the hoe, or whatever else there is down there! And we Indicating the crowd inside the cave we can get a rope, as well, if you want!

600

Knemon:

You! May the gods curse you with curses upon curses and destroy you whole, if ever I ask even the slightest thing from you!

Exit Knemon into his house angrily

Getas:

Off his head again!

What a miserable man, ey? A life burdened by a million miseries! That's the genuine Attic peasant in there! Attica's two-oxen man! Attica's farmer! Battling with barren rocks all day. Nothing but thyme and sage comes out of those rocks! Crops of agony and nothing more.

He sees Sostratos with Gorgias and Daos in the distance within
Ah! And here comes my master with a couple of guests, laborers! The man is mad! Why is he bringing these people here now and how did he become so chummy with them?
Well, I'm not hanging around here to find out, that's for sure!

Exit Getas into the cave

Enter Sostratos, Gorgias and Daos

610

Sostratos:

No, no, NO! I'm not letting you get out of this one, men! We have everything in there! By my dear Herakles! Is there a man in the world who would refuse an invitation to his friend's table, when his friend has just done a sacrifice to a god?

Believe me, I was just like an old friend of yours even before I got to know you!

Hands Daos the tools

Take these inside, Daos and hurry back again.

Gorgias: *To Daos*

No, no, Daos. Don't leave mother on her own. Stay there and look after her. I'll be there soon, as well.

Exit Daos into Gorgias' house and Gorgias follows Sostratos into the cave.

Pause

ACT FOUR

(or a choral interlude)

Enter Simike from Knemon's house

Simike:

Help! Someone please help me! Rushes over to Pan Oh, god, please help me!

Runs about the stage wildly.

Is there no one around who can help me?

Enter Sicon from the cave

Sicon:

Oh, by Herakles! Lord and master!

In the name of all the gods and all the spirits, woman! Will you not give us some peace to conduct our sacred sacrifice? What is it with you people in that house? You insult one another, you beat one another up, you scream at each other, you screech and you yell and you wail! What a strange household you're running in there!

Simike:

It's my master! He is down! He's fallen down, inside the well! All the way to the bottom!

Sicon:

Inside the what? What well? How did he get in there?

Simike:

What do you mean how did he get in there?

Sicon:

I mean how did he get in there?

Simike:

He got in there so he could bring up his hoe and the bucket! He slipped on the way down. Slipped and fell to the bottom! All the way to the bottom!

Sicon:

Who, the grouch? That nasty old grouch?

Simike: *Timidly in agreement*

Yes, him!

Sicon:

But my dear, dear old woman! That's the best thing he's ever done in his whole life! Now it's up to you to finish the job!

Simike:

What job?

630

Sicon:

Listen! Just go grab something heavy, a rock, a stone, anything and chuck it down, all the way down, onto his head...

Simike: *Interrupts him. The suggestion abhors her*

Won't you go down there yourself, please my good man? Please go and save him!

Sicon:

Who me? Dear Poseidon, me? And end up being the fool in that story about the man who fought the mad dog in the well? No way, old woman, not I!

Simike: *Knocks on the door of Gorgias' house*

Gorgias? Gorgias? Come out, Gorgias!

Gorgias comes out from the cave. He looks dazed.

Gorgias:

Where on earth am I? Simike, is that you? Did you call me?

Simike:

Yes Gorgias!

Gorgias:

What is it? What's the problem?

Simike:

It's my master, Gorgias. My master has fallen in *the well!*

Gorgias:

Oh, Lord! *Turns towards the cave*

Sostratos! Sostratos come out here!

Sostratos enters from the cave

To Simike

Come, lead on! Quick!

Sostratos, Simike and Gorgias rush into Knemon's house.

Sicon is left alone on the stage

638

Sicon:

Well, this proves well and truly that there are gods! Gods do exist! By Dionysos, there ARE gods!

Turns to Knemon's door and speaks to it

See? You don't lend your pot to people who need it for a sacrifice! You refuse to do so, as if you're holding some grudge against them!

So! Now, you... you temple-thief you! Now you're at the bottom of a well, so, so now drink all the water that's down there so you won't have to share even that with anyone either! Not even water! Just rewards for you ey?

The Nymphs have made you pay well for your stinginess by exacting revenge on my behalf! Justice!

Ha! No one who does wrong to cooks escapes the wrath of the nymphs!

Our work is almost holy. The waiters though, well, don't worry about the waiters! You can do whatever you like to the waiters!

No worries!

Myrrhini: *From inside the house*

Oh, gods! Is he dead? Someone please save my darling father!

Sicon:

Ah! I hear voices!

What a terrible feast this turned out to be! Never seen anything like it! One lot is dying, another lot is crying! Herakles save me and avert all ill will against me!

Goes and puts his ear close to the door

Can't hear anything now! Looks like someone has gone down the well to bring the old grouch back up again.

Ha! Remember the face on the old man? What a splendid sight it would be now, ey? Soaked and shivering and trembling! Grrrr! I'd love to see it here and now, by Apollo!

Shouts into the cave

You women, in there! Offer libations on behalf of these good folk out here *Indicating the audience* and pray that he survives but is left maimed... rather badly, if the gods will agree! That'll make him less of a pain to Pan here! And to all his neighbours! And to all those people who offer sacrifices! That'll be good for a cook like me! I'll get a lot of work then!

Enter Sostratos from Knemon's house

665

Sostratos:

Sicon!

Sicon:

Sostratos, what happened in there?

Sostratos:

By all the gods, Sicon and by Demeter and Asclepios, as well! I have never in my life seen a man undergo a near-drowning experience at the most appropriate moment, the moment when life was beginning to turn on its sweetest charm!

670

We rushed into the house and, straight away, Gorgias rushed to the well.

Down he went, up the gorgeous Myrrhini and I stayed. We did nothing unbecoming, of course – in any case what could we

ever do under such turbulent circumstances? The girl was out of her wits with distress! She was pulling her hair out and wailing and beating her breasts and pulling her hair out and wailing... Well I, like the good man that I am, I swear by the gods that I behaved just like a comforting nanny to her. I stood right beside her and, awe-struck by her statuesque body, begged her and prayed to her to stop crying! So awe-struck I was by her incomparable body that I had completely forgotten about the fallen body below! I cared about him less than I cared about anything. Still, I was supposed to keep pulling at the rope to bring him up. Boring nonsense that, so... I... *Indicates that he let the rope slip through his fingers*

Sicon:
I can imagine!

680

Sostratos:
Ha! Nearly killed the man, by Zeus! I was so taken by the body standing next to me that the rope slipped from my hand three times! Lucky for him, Gorgias –a real Atlas that man!– who was under him, in the well, managed to hold him up until I, eventually, hauled him all the way out of the well. The moment he got out, I shot out of the place and here I am. I just couldn't control my desires any longer. A minute later I'd be kissing that stunning looking woman! I love her so passionately! So very, very fiercely that I want to marry her and I must make up my mind –
Noises from inside Knemon's house interrupt him
Ah, they're at the door now!

Sicon:
And here's where I run off!

Exit Sicon into the cave
Enter Myrrhini, Gorgias and Simike. They are carrying Knemon on a stretcher.

Sostratos:
Zeus, my saviour, what vision is this?

690

Gorgias:

Knemon, is there anything you want me to do for you, old man?
Tell me!

Knemon:

What could there possibly be? Look at the state I'm in!

Gorgias:

Courage, Knemon! Have courage!

Knemon:

I will die! I will die and you'll never have to worry about
Knemon, the old grump pestering you ever again!

Gorgias:

You see, Knemon? Being alone is a terrible thing.
You see? Just now, suddenly and out of nowhere you nearly
died! At your age, Knemon, you need to think about yourself a
bit more. About your life, I mean. About having someone to
look after you.

Knemon:

Gorgias, I've had it. I know that. Call your mother quickly!
It seems we need to get into trouble before we learn how to
avert it.

Exit Gorgias to his house

To Myrrhini:

My darling daughter, lift my head up a bit, if you can, please.
She does so

701

Sostratos:

You're a very lucky man, Knemon!

Knemon: to Sostratos

And you! You useless loaf! Why are you still hanging around my
door? Do you think it's your private club or some public shop or
something? Leave! Get lost and don't let me ever see you again!
Go on! be off with you!

Sostratos:

Alright, alright, old man! I'm leaving! I'm leaving right now!

Retreats to the edge of the stage

Knemon: *To Myrrhini and Gorgias*

You should have left me down there, you two. Down at the bottom of the well. Now that I am up here, alive, now that you've saved me, I must face up to the horrible state I'm in. You should have let me die down there. Don't get me wrong, I don't mean anything bad by it but I am a stubborn old man. No one will ever change me. I cannot change!

710

Perhaps I was wrong on this one thing though and that is that I always believed that man is his own boss; that he can manage things all on his own and needs no one else's help. Perhaps I was wrong on that matter but now, now that I've seen for myself that life is short and that it can end very abruptly I've learnt my lesson. I've learnt that I was wrong. The shortness of life and its ability to end so suddenly is a fact that I have never before understood.

That's how far off the rails I was, by Hephaistos! I use to think that everyone's life, with all the trickery and villainy that is thrown upon it from every quarter, well I never thought that there could be a man anywhere in the world who could honestly be good and helpful to his fellow man!

720

It was that fault in my thinking that had made me so hard, so difficult a man to deal with.

But now Gorgias has taught me this lesson and he has corrected this fault in my thinking. This is a lesson that comes from a noble and generous heart. And I say this because this is the man who, even though I have never allowed him to even knock on my door, let alone give him a hand with anything, a man I have never greeted, never ever said a kind word to him, he has saved my life!

Gorgias:

Whenever you were right and you told me to keep out of your way, I did and perhaps also, you might have never done us a

favour but then again, neither have we, until now, done you one...

Knemon:

Well then, Gorgias? What do we do now, my boy? I'm not well now my son and I very much doubt I'll ever get better so, well, now I adopt you as my very own, fully legitimate son! From now on, Gorgias, consider all my wealth yours!

730

Indicating Myrrhini

And I entrust you with this young woman, your step sister, Gorgias. Find her a husband and marry her off because, even if I regain my health, I wouldn't be able to do that on my own and, in any case I don't think I'd approve of any man to marry her. Marry her off and then let me live the remainder of my life the way I want.

And take care of everything else, as well, Gorgias. Manage them your way. You have a good brain, thank the gods, and you are a good guardian for your step sister. Divide the property in two and give her half of it as dowry. Keep the other half yourself and look after me and your mother.

740

To Myrrhini

You can let my head down now, daughter.

Now, son, it's not right for a man to say more words than are necessary but there are a couple more things I'd like to say to you about life and about human nature.

If every man had a good mind, there would be no courts and no **prisons** to lock them into. Nor would there be any wars. And everyone would be happy with owning only what he needed. But, I suppose, people like the way things are now, so carry on behaving as before. This old and difficult man is now going to leave you alone.

Gorgias:

Yes, I accept all that, Knemon. But as for Myrrhini, we must find her a husband that you also like.

750

Knemon:

Gorgias, I've told you all my thoughts on the matter, so, no bother me no more with it!

Gorgias:
Someone here wants to say something to you.

Knemon:
No, in the name of all the gods, I want to talk to no one!

Gorgias:
He wants to ask you for your daughter's hand in marriage.

Knemon:
None of this is my business any more.

Gorgias:
He helped me save your life.

Knemon:
Who's that?

Gorgias:
He's over there.
To Sostratos
Hey, you, Sostratos! Come over here!

Knemon:
He looks a bit sunburned. Is he a farmer too?

Gorgias:
Yes, father. He's not one of those idle loafers who wander about the earth, doing nothing all day, or one of those rich show offs!

Knemon:
If you want to give her to him, fine, go ahead but leave me out of it.

Gorgias:
Yes, I think it'd be best do that! I think it would be best if I did all the marriage arrangements myself. Simike, help him, please. Take him inside.

Knemon: *As he's leaving*

Gorgias, take good care of her from now on.

760

Gorgias:

Rest easy father. I shall.

Exit Simike, Myrrhini and Knemon, leaving Gorgias alone with Sostratos.

Gorgias:

I'd say you're in luck, Sostratos! Her father will disagree on nothing now!

Well then, I hereby betroth you to her and before all these witnesses, I grant you all her wealth, whatever it is as her dowry, a just grant for you, since you have come here not in secrecy and hiding dishonest **schemes** but in all honesty, to woo her and to marry her. You have shown yourself to be a man of virtue and nobility.

You willingly picked up the pick and you worked hard in the field. And this is how you can tell a man is noble: even if he is wealthy he still respects the poor and treats them as his equals. Your character is good, Sostratos and I only hope that it remains so always.

770

Sostratos:

Thank you, Gorgias! The best praise is the praise one receives from others.

Seeing his father approaching in the distance.

Ah! Here's my father! Perfect timing!

Gorgias:

Is Kallippides your father?

Sostratos:

But of course! Why?

Gorgias:

But, by Zeus, he is such a wealthy man, Sostratos but no wonder! He is a farmer through and through and, in farming he has no equal!

Enter Kallippides

Kallippides: *Muttering to himself*

I bet I've missed out on all the food by now! They would have gobbled it all up and then gone off and disappeared into the fields!

Gorgias:

By Zeus, what a hunger he must have, Sostratos! Should we talk to him about our matter now?

Sostratos:

Best if he eats first, Gorgias. Put him in a better mood for it.

Kallippides:

How are you son? Have you all eaten?

Sostratos:

Yes, father but, don't worry, we left some for you, too. Come through.

780

Kallippides:

That I shall do, son, that I shall do! I am starving!

Exit Kallippides into the cave

Gorgias: *Heading towards his own house*

You go inside too, Sostratos! Go after him and talk to him on your own.

Sostratos:

Will you wait for me in your place?

Gorgias:

Yes, yes, I won't go anywhere.

Sostratos:

Fine. I won't be long. I'll come out and call you.

Exit both. Gorgias into his house and Sostratos into the cave

ACT FIVE

(Or a choral interlude)

Enter Kallippides and Sostratos from the cave

Sostratos:

Father, you never ever let me do what I want! Oh, well, I didn't think you would, anyway! Never mind!

Kallippides:

What are you saying, son? Have I not agreed that you can marry whoever you want? Whoever you love? Son, not only do I want this for you, I also say you should do it! You should marry this girl! Everyone should marry who they love!

Sostratos:

But that's not how I think you really see things, dad.

Kallippides:

By the gods, son! I know very well how I see things and what I am saying is that the best marriage for a young person is a marriage that is urged by love!

Sostratos:

Well then, why is it all right for me to marry this young man's sister and it's not right for him to marry my sister?

Kallippides:

Ah, now you're being stupid Sostratos! It is because I don't want, both, a poor daughter-in-law and a poor son-in-law! One poor in-law in a family is more than enough!

Sostratos:

Father, you are talking about money. Wealth. Uncertain stuff. If you have the confidence that this wealth of yours will stay with you until you die, then, by all means. keep it, give none of it to anyone else. Share none of it.

800

But if you think that it is yours only because the goddess Fortune has put it in your hands for now, temporarily, then share it! Share it around, father! Do not hold on to all of it yourself because the goddess could take it all away from you just as easily as she has given it to you! All of it, any time she likes! She could take it all and hand it over to someone who might not even deserve it!

And that's why, father, I ask you to be generous with it. While you've still got, while the goddess allows you to have it, treat it with an open heart. Help as many poor people as you can and make as many of them as you can, rich with it! Because that's the only thing that survives death. Kindness and generosity and when Fortune turns nasty on you, it is this generosity and this kindness that will come back for you.

The friend you can see is a far better friend than all the wealth buried deep below the soil.

812

Kallippides:

Son, you know me well. You know very well that none of my money is buried anywhere. Why would I do a thing like that? It's all out in the open and it's all yours.

And if what you want to do with this money is use it to make friends, well, by all means, go ahead! Try it and good luck with it. No need to explain yourself to me, son. Go ahead, give it away! Spread it around, as you say. I am not going to stop you!

Sostratos:

Is that your wish, truly? Do you really mean it?

Kallippides:

Yes, yes, that is my wish, truly and I truly mean it! You have convinced me of the error of my ways, Sostratos, so don't worry about a thing. Do as you please with it! It is, after all, your own wealth!

Sostratos:
In that case, I'll call Gorgias!
Gorgias! Gorgias, are you in there?

Enter Gorgias from his house

820

Gorgias:
I've heard everything, Sostratos! I've heard everything you two said from the very start of your conversation. But still, Sostratos – Sostratos, you're a wonderful, generous man and I think of you as a true and loyal friend and I love you a lot but – but, Sostratos, I don't want any more wealth than what I need and I have that. In any case, even if I wanted it, I couldn't have it.

Sostratos:
What? Why ever not? I don't understand, Gorgias.

Gorgias:
Sostratos, I am giving you my sister as your wife but for you to give me your sister, well, that's just not right, Sostratos!

Sostratos:
What do you mean, it's not right?

Gorgias:
It won't be me, Sostratos. That's not who I am. I will be living like a wealthy man with someone else's earnings. That's not my way. I want to be the earner of my own wealth.

830

Sostratos:
What nonsense, Gorgias! Do you not think yourself worthy of a marriage?

Gorgias:
No, I do think myself worthy of marrying your sister but I do not think it right for me to have a lot when I only have a little.

Kallippides:

By the great Zeus, man, has kindness made you stupid?

Gorgias:

What? What do you mean?

Kallippides:

You're a pauper, Gorgias, a pauper who wants to stay a pauper.

What pauper thinks like that? Nonsense, man!

Well, all right then, do as you please but you see that my son has made me change my mind about such matters. Now change your mind, too and take some money!

He hands Gorgias a purse full of coin.

Gorgias: *Jiggles the purse*

Well now, this tactic has indeed, persuaded me. I would be both, a pauper and an idiot if I didn't take this money. How can I refuse it from a man who offers me and my future wife, such security?

840

Sostratos:

Now, men, there's only one more thing left to be done: The betrothal.

Kallippides: *To Gorgias*

Right: Let me do that now! I, Kallippides, father of Sostratos do hereby betroth my daughter to you, Gorgias, to have many legitimate children and I hereby also add to her dowry another three talents.

Gorgias:

And I have one talent dowry for my sister!

Kallippides:

Don't waste your money, Gorgias. You don't have that much of it.

Gorgias:

Yes, I do, I have the farm!

Kallippides:

Gorgias, keep the farm all to yourself.

Now go and fetch your mother and your sister and bring them here with our women.

Gorgias:

Yes, I should do that.

850

Sostratos:

Tonight we'll all stay here together and tomorrow we'll conduct the wedding ceremonies and the feasts. Gorgias, bring old man, Knemon over, as well. He'll be looked after better with us.

Gorgias:

Sostratos, I don't think he'll want to do that.

Sostratos:

Try, Gorgias. See if you can convince him.

Gorgias:

Alright, I'll try!

Exit Gorgias into Knemon's house

Sostratos:

Father, we better get a good drinking party for us men and make the women keep an all night vigil.

Kallippides:

I think the opposite will happen, son: the ladies will drink and we'll be kept awake all night! I'll go and get things ready.

Sostratos:

Fine, see you later dad!

Exit Kallippides into the cave. Sostratos is alone on the stage.

860

Sostratos:

The wise man must never change his mind. About anything!

Everything gets accomplished with knowledge and effort.
Let me give you just this one example: In one single day I have
managed to get the whole business completed for a wedding!
One which no one would ever believe it was possible!

Enter Gorgias with his mother and his sister, Myrrhini.

Gorgias: *To the women*
Hurry, then, walk a bit faster, you two!

Sostratos:
Welcome ladies!

Enter his mother from the cave

Sostratos:
Mother, say hello to these ladies!

They nod their mutual greeting

Gorgias: *To Sostratos*
Old Knemon wouldn't budge and he kept urging the old girl to
come so he could be left alone.

Sostratos:
What a stubborn old skull, that one, ey? It will never change!
Still, let him be.
Let's go in then!

870

Gorgias:
Sostratos, I feel a bit... well, a bit too embarrassed to meet all
those women in there.

Sostratos:
Nonsense, Gorgias! From now on, all those women in there will
be your family!

All exit into the cave
Enter Simike from Knemon's house.

Simike: *To Knemon inside*

By Artemis, I'm leaving as well! You can lie in there all by yourself from now on! You and your horrible temper! All these folks wanted to do with you was to take you to the god, but you! Oh, no! You just refused! Always refuse, always say no! I'm telling you, Knemon, I swear by the two goddesses, we'll end up with another big mess again, bigger than ever before but, if that happens, you will deserve everything you get!

Enter Getas from the cave. He is followed by a flute girl

Getas:

I'm going in there to see how old Knemon is.

The flute girl blows a couple of happy notes

880

Getas: *Interrupts her*

Stop that, you silly girl! This is not yet the right time for that! I have been sent to check on the old grouch in there!

Simike:

One of you should go in and sit with him. I'm losing my young mistress to a marriage today. I want to go and have a little chat with her before that. Kiss her goodbye. Give her some womanly advice.

Getas:

That's a good idea. Go on then! I'll look after him for a while.

Exit Simike into the cave

I wanted to do this for a long time now but just couldn't work out how and when. I wanted to pay him back for all the nastiness he showed me. I'm not afraid of the old grouch any more! The old fool can't even stand on his own two feet now.

Shouts into the cave

Sicon! Sicon, come out here quick! Man, what a great idea I've got!

Enter Sicon from the cave

Sicon:

You called me?

890

Getas:

Yes, I did, Sicon. How would you like to earn a bit of revenge for all the suffering that the old grouch in there put you through?

Sicon:

Me? What trouble? What nonsense are you up to now, Getas?

Getas:

The old man is just laying in there all on his own.

Sicon:

Yes, and how is he?

Getas:

Not too bad, really... for now!

Sicon:

So he can't get up and beat us up, right?

Getas:

I don't think he's got the courage to get up.

Sicon:

Now that is good news! I think I'll go in and ask for something. Send him right off his skull!

Getas:

But first I think we should drag him all the way out here, ey?
Drop him right out here and then go bang on his door real loud.
Bang, bang, bang. Ask him for all sorts of things. Hehehe! He'll choke on his anger! A party for us! What do you think?

900

Sicon:

Getas, I'm afraid of Gorgias. If he catches us it'll be us who'll be getting beaten up!

Getas:

Nah, don't worry, Sicon. There's so much noise in there and they're so drunk, they won't hear a thing of what's going on out here. And, anyhow, Sicon, we've got to teach the old man a lesson. Curb his manners a bit. Tame the wild beast in him! We're all related to him now, see. What if he never mends his crabby ways? How will we ever be able to endure his nasty temper?

Sicon:

So how are we going to do this?

Getas:

We'll do it in secret. Quietly, secretly without anyone seeing us or hearing us. We'll bring him out here with great care.

Makes a few steps towards Knemon's house

Come on, then. Make a move!

910

Sicon:

Hang on a minute now! Don't go off without me! And don't make so much noise!

Getas:

I'm not!

They enter Knemon's house and a minute later return, gingerly, carrying the stretcher upon which Knemon is sleeping. They are being careful not to wake him up.

Sicon:

Put him down here.

The stretcher is carefully and gently put down

Getas:

Now, let's go!

Sicon:

Now, I'll start first and you, you keep with rhythm.

Bangs hard at the door and shouts loudly. *Mockingly*

Boy! Ey boy! Boys! melodically Ey, booooooys! I'm calling
youuuuuuuuu!
Come out, boyyyyyyys!

Knemon: *wakes with fright*
Oh, no! I'm dead! I'm dead! Heeeelp! Who are you?
Recognises Sicon Oh, you're... you are that man... What in
Hades' name do you want now? Heeeelp!

Sicon:
What do I want? You know what I want: I want some pots and
pans! Hahahaha!

Knemon:
Someone help me up!

Sicon:
Come on, I know you've got some in there! I want some pots
and pans!

Getas:
And I want seven three-legged stools and a dozen tables!
Hahaha! Three-legged stools, get it?
Shouts through Knemon's door
Come on boys! Boyyyys! Bring them out, now come on! Hurry,
hurry, hurry, 'cause I'm in a hurry, hurry, hurry! Hahahaha!

Knemon:
There's no point in you shouting in there. **There's** no one
home! I told you, you nasty man!

Getas:
What? No one? Really? Let me see: Hello boyyyyyyys! Boys, are
you in there?

Knemon:
No, they're not! Are you deaf? Do you want me to repeat myself
a thousand times? There's no one home!

Sicon:

Oh, well in that case, I better run off and look for them elsewhere.

Pretends to be leaving

Knemon:

By horrible Hades! How on earth did I end up out here, in the middle of the road? Who dragged me out here? Be off with you! Be off, you bastards!

920

Sicon:

Oh, it would be my pleasure, good sir!

Pretends to be leaving but goes and bangs hard at Knemon's door and shouts loudly again:

Boy! Ey boy! Boys! Melodically Ey, boooooys! I'm calling youuuuuuuuu!

Come out, boyyyyyyys! Men, women and boooooys! Bangs loudly on the door

Knemon:

Have you gone mad? Ey! You're smashing my door!

Sicon:

Give us nine rugs!

Knemon:

What nine rugs? What are you talking about? Where am I going to fond nine rugs?

Sicon:

And a nice, Persian curtain...

Getas:

Woven... Persian. Persian and woven!

Sicon:

One hundred feet long! Hahaha!

Knemon:

I wish I had one!

Sicon:

Oh, but you do! You do have one! A little birdie told me that you do have one!

Knemon:

I do? Where is it? Curse you!

Shouts

Simike? Simike where are you? Where is that old woman?

Sicon: *Pretends to be listening for Simike*

Hmmm, can't hear anything. I think she left you!

Getas:

For good and for ever!

Sicon:

I think I'll go look for her!

Knemon:

Do that! Do that and leave me in peace! Shouts again Simike!

Simike, old woman!

To the men May the gods grant you a death with the most horrible torture, you evil creatures! What is it you want from me, ey? What is it?

Sicon:

Me? I'm looking for a wine mixer...

Getas:

A bronze one. A largish one! It must be a largish bronze wine mixer!

Knemon:

Ah! Will no one help me up!

Sicon:

Now, I know you've got one. I'm sure of it! A little birdie told me...

Getas:

And what about the curtain, granpa?

Knemon: shouts

Boy! Boy where are you, damn you! Where's that cursed slave of mine!

930

Sicon:

Come on, go and get us a wine mixer! Where's our wine mixer?

Knemon:

I'm going to kill that Simike!

Getas:

Lie there and shut up, grumpy grouch!

You hate people, you hate women, you hate everyone – why, you didn't even let those good folk take you to the sacrifice!

Sicon:

Well then, serves you right, old man!

Getas:

Accept your punishment, old boy!

Sicon:

You'll find there's no one willing to help you out of **your** misery this time, you old grouch!

Getas:

We're all right here and from now on you'll listen to us and you'll obey us!

Sicon:

Now come with us to the sacrifice in the cave and give us no more trouble!

Getas:

The women have no need of your groaning and griping and complaining any more. Get my meaning... old boy?

Knemon:

And what about you two, ey? What good have you two ever done for them?

Getas:

Well, Fate's twists and turns have benefited your daughter and your wife and their meeting one another was not wasted.

940

Sicon:

And so to add to their joy I organised a drinking party for them and the rest of the folk... Ey, do you hear me? You're not asleep, are you?

Knemon:

Gods forbid!

Sicon:

Do you want to come to that party? Listen to the whole story about the party!

Things were a little rushed, you see, so I spread rugs around the tables. It's my job as a cook, right? Remember that, I'm a good cook and a good man! So, anyhow, one of the men poured wine –the aged stuff– into the deep bowl, mixed it with the crystal clear water from Nymphs' streams and passed around. Then he offered a toast to all the men. Then another man offered a toast to all the women.

Ha! It was like they were trying to quench the thirst of a dirty big sand dune! You know what I mean? Cup after cup after cup after cup! Down all the parched gullets they went!

Then some beautiful young flower, a little tipsy I might add, got up, walked shyly up to the dance floor and began to shake and dance. Then another young woman got up, held her hand and joined her in the shaking and the dancing!

952

Getas: *To Knemon*

Oh, all right! Come on then, you've suffered enough for one day. Now get up and come in with us! Come and dance with us!

Knemon:

What? What on earth are talking about, you scum?

Sicon and Getas grab him and lift him up

Sicon:

Come on, you grumpy farmer! Come and dance with us!

Knemon:

No way! In the name of all the gods, no way! I do not dance!
Ever!

Sicon:

Come on! Come on now! Let's go inside!

Knemon:

And do what, you pair of bums?

Getas:

I told you, to dance, grumpy bum, to dance!

Knemon:

Ah, well! Might as well! Take me in then! Perhaps it's better to try and cope with the torture in there then with that out here!

Gekas:

See, you do have some sense in that grouchy skull of yours!

He helps Knemon up.

Enter Donax from the cave

Getas:

Hurrah! We win, men, we win! We win a strong victory!

Ah, Donax! You too, Sicon, come help me. Help this man inside.

And you, Knemon! Now you had better be very careful we don't catch you being your usual misanthropic grouch again and start upsetting everyone! Because if we do, rest assured, old man, that we won't be so easy on you the next time.

Now! For our victory! Someone get us some garlands and some torches!

Exit the party goers from the cave and distribute garlands and torches.

Getas: *gives a garland to Knemon*

Here's one for you, old man!

To the audience

Well now, friends, if you have enjoyed the victory we had over this old grumpy grouch, all of you, children, boys, men, women, give us a hearty applause!

And may Victory, that noble, ever-smiling girl be with us in good will always!

END OF MENANDER'S

"GROUCH"